

THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: In the European Union regions are territorial units of medium size, created with the purpose to absorb efficiently the European Union funds for regional development and to interpret and research the regional statistics. In Romania there are 8 development regions. The regional development of tourism must be a sustainable one. The analysis of some indicators show that after a long period when the tourism had a descendent curve, in the last years this has had a positive evolution in almost all regions. The tourism may become an important component of the economy, which can determine important mutations in the territorial field, contributing to the social-economic growth of a region. In the last years it is noticed a small growth of the tourism, tendency expected in the future, too.

Key words: regional development, sustainable development, tourism

1. Issues of Regional Development. Considerations over regional development in Romania

The main objectives of the regional development policies are as follows:

- to reduce the existing regional disparities, especially by stimulating the well-balanced development and the revitalization of the disadvantaged areas (lagging behind in development) and by preventing the emergence of new imbalances;
- to prepare the institutional framework in order to comply with the integration criteria into the EU structures and to ensure access to the financial assistance instruments (the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund of the EU);
- to correlate the governmental sector development policies and activities at the level of regions by stimulating the inter-regional, internal and international, cross-border cooperation which contributes to the economic development and is in accordance with the legal provisions and with the international agreements to which Romania is a party.

The principles that the elaboration and the application of the development policies are based on are: decentralization of the decision making process, from the central/governmental level to the level of regional communities; partnership among all those involved in the area of regional development; planning – utilization process of resources (through programs and projects) in view of attaining the established objectives; co-financing – the financial contribution of the different actors involved in the accomplishment of the regional development programs and projects.

In order to apply the regional development strategy, eight development regions were set up, spreading throughout the whole territory of Romania. Each development region comprises several counties. Between 1998 and 1999 in Romania it developed, with PHARE support, a complex institutional environment destined to realize the regional development objectives stipulated by the Law nr.151/1998 concerning the regional development in Romania, respecting the principles of allocating the structural funds (mainly The European Fund of Regional Development) to the member states of the European Union. The regions' function is to allocate the European Union's funds for regional development and to interpret and research the regional statistics. The current tendency in E.U. is to decentralize the decisions.

The overview of the situation in Romania related to regional development revealed several aspects, which can lead to the conclusion that in the field of regional policy, there have been a lot of progress achieved

during the last years, but there are still many things to be done in order to comply with the legal and institutional requests of the EU cohesion policy.

2. The Sustainable Development and Romanian Sustainable Tourism

The tourism sector constitutes one of the most important sources of wealth of nations regardless of their level of development. The negative impact of tourism, including its growing threat to the aims and practice of many conservations bodies was becoming better and more widely understood, in developed and developing countries alike. Mass tourism can destroy the environment, the economy, the host country and its people, even the tourists themselves. **Sustainable development** is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The effect of our continuing misuse of the earth' resources, the part played by tourism in this process, the links between development and tourism are very important issues to be solved.

The economic, social and political context of the period after 1990 has not been one that contributed to the Romanian tourism development. Today, the Romanian hospitality industry confronts itself with problems such as: the decline of the internal and external tourist demand, an old tourist product, the low standard in the services which do not satisfy the tourists' expectations, the payment and too high prices compared to the quality of the services, an insufficient promotion.

3. The tourism in the development regions of Romania

The durable regional development must necessarily correlate and integrate the tourism of Romania, among other local economic components taking into account that this clean industry does not affect the environment and does not imply big investments. A good project of lasting development, included in a program of regional development, supposes investments less expensive if the integration is harmoniously organized. The tourism may become an important component of economy capable of important mutations in the territorial profile, determining a social-economic growth of some poor regions, as that from the North- East.

The North-East region is one of the least developed areas from Romania. The tourism may determine a lasting regional development in the North-East part of Romania and the growth of the living standards, because the European Union's policy intends to eliminate differences among regions. The tourism may contribute, more than other sectors, to the accomplishment of some larger objectives, established by governments as priorities for the general interest of the citizens: fighting against poverty, improving life standards, growing currency cashing, intensification of relations between countries, even politic objectives. The development of the local tourism must be done with the local authorities' support, which have to take into account that, besides positive effects, the tourism generates a lot of negative effects, too. By a careful planning and an intelligent management, the benefits may be maximized and problems minimized. Thus, it may be realized a lasting development of the tourist sector by protecting environment and local culture. Thus, in the period of 1991-2003, the existing accommodation capacity, expressed by the number of accommodation places, continued to fall down, and in 2003 it was recorded a growth, both at the national and at the North-East region levels (table no.1).

Table no. 1. Accommodation existing capacity in development regions, in the period 1991 - 2005

- Number of accommodation places -

Year	Total	North-East	South-East	South	South-West	West	North-West	Center	Bucharest
1991	312407	23321	146527	25955	22230	21036	24732	38600	10006
2001	277047	16971	132053	21321	15326	22298	25197	34648	9233
2002	272596	17269	130111	21456	14855	20190	24561	33823	10331
2003	273614	17965	130991	21729	15112	20713	24320	32759	10025
2004	275941	17183	130854	22494	13936	21066	24576	34365	11467
2005	282661	18718	132965	22292	14672	21291	26019	35479	11225

Source: Territorial statistics 2002, INSSE, Bucharest, p. 327-336; The Statistical Yearbook of Romania, INSSE, Bucharest, 2002, p. 784, 2003, p. 839, 2004, p. 713, 2005, p. 740 and 2006, p. 740

In terms of development regions, the areas with the highest number of accommodation places are: the South-East followed by Center, North-West and South regions. We see that the South-east region has almost a half of the total accommodation places which exist at the national level. The index of plain utilization of the functioning capacities had also a descending evolution. This decreased at the national level from 1991 to 2005, when it reached 33,4%. In the North-East region, the index is taking the general tendency of diminishing at the national level; it is the lowest index of all regions (table no. 2).

Table no. 2. Indices of net using the capacity in function, in development regions, in the period 1991 - 2005

-%-

Year	Total	North-East	South-East	South	South-West	West	North-West	Center	Bucharest
1991	49,8	46,1	52,9	52,6	46,2	49,0	46,1	46,0	60,6
2001	34,9	30,2	42,3	29,2	44,9	36,9	31,9	28,2	32,2
2002	34,0	28,9	38,2	27,1	45,0	39,1	32,8	28,8	31,9
2003	34,6	29,2	37,8	28,7	44,4	38,7	35,5	28,5	35,9
2004	34,3	29,5	39,2	27,7	44,5	35,9	33,2	29,4	35,3
2005	33,4	27,2	37,8	28,1	40,6	34,7	32,2	29,5	38,1

Source: Territorial Statistics 2002, INSSE, Bucharest, p. 327 – 336 and The Statistical Yearbook of Romania, INSSE, Bucharest, 2002 , p. 784, 2003, p. 839, 2004, p. 713, 2005, p. 740, 2006, p. 740

A descending evolution has in the period 1991-2002 the index “Arrivals”, too. This evolution is explained by the modest life conditions which made that the majority of Romanian people not be able to afford going on holydays. Also, the continuing decrease of the quality of the tourist services has made the wealthy people spend their holyday abroad. The biggest decrease, in a relative expression, may be found at the “Arrivals” index in the North-East and South-West regions. In the last years these things have started to change, so, after the year 2003 the “Arrivals” index has a tendency to grow (table no. 3).

Table no. 3. Tourist arrivals in the tourist units, in the development regions, in the period 1991 - 2005

-Thousands-

Year	Total	North-East	South-East	South	South- West	West	North-West	Center	Bucharest
1991	9603,3	1389,5	1789,2	1184,9	793,3	923,8	1099,6	1494,4	928,6
2001	4875,0	535,0	994,0	546,0	338,0	541,0	596,0	837,0	488,0
2002	4847,0	535,0	984,0	549,0	350,0	493,0	629,0	753,0	554,0
2003	5057,0	553,0	1019,0	572,0	324,0	520,0	637,0	847,0	585,0
2004	5639	619	1133	576	361	536	698	986	730
2005	5805	622	1108	574	334	535	733	1068	831

Source: Territorial Statistics 2001, INSSE, Bucharest, p. 327 – 336; The Statistical Yearbook of Romania, INSSE, Bucharest 2002, p. 784, 2003, p. 839, 2004, p. 713, 2005, p. 740, 2006, p. 740

4. Development directions of the regional tourism

Romania has a tourist potential not fully exploited, and the tourism is one of those areas which do not require huge investments. The development of the tourism will determine a development of the region by increasing income and by stimulating of those activities related to tourism. The tourism is able to contribute to the internal development of a region, to the reduction of the regional unbalances, to the geographical redistribution of the welfare from the metropolitan areas towards the poor, peripheral ones. Consequently, the tourism appears as a viable alternative of development of different regions.

For the rural tourist development there are financing programs for developing of those agro tourist lodgings. This may be an explanation for the great number of agro tourist lodgings, appeared in the last years, together with the change in the tourist services consumer's behavior. The tourism still has a general infrastructure (particularly of the communication means) and support of the inadequate tourism. The services of information and promotion of tourism are insufficiently developed. There is not enough qualified staff in this field. At the regional level, for a lasting development of the tourism, we can systematize as objectives: modernization of the tourists offers; developing regional tourist products; re-qualification of the labor force; improving the quality of the services; improving collaboration and public-private partnership; producing and delivering advertising promoting materials; setting up and expanding regional tourist information points. One of the most important measures for economic development of the regions is that referring to the development of the tourist infrastructure. A long time planning involvement, supposes an approach of the tourist activity at the regional level. This supposes community involvement in the process of planning and developing, also in creating and developing tourism forms which determine benefits for the inhabitants. If they have advantages from the development of the tourism, then they will be more interested in supporting the tourism development in that particular region, willing, in the same time to preserve the tourist resources.

The development of tourism attracts, too, the development of other related areas. The notion of effects of multiplication established by receipts/expenditures, in the tourism, becomes relevant as a considerable number of another branches benefit of activities from the tourist sector, the multiplier's value may be interpreted as a stimulus-answer report in the context of the initial injection of expenditures in the tourism area. The tourist multiplier underlines that an initial expenditure made by a tourist in a region or in a country, becomes successively income for another economic areas (agriculture, the processing industry, the industry of consumer goods, the construction and construction material industry, trade, services) related directly or indirectly to tourism until the moment when those financial resources leave the country, the reference zone or the economic sphere, generally under the form of tax payments, savings, imports etc., called the leakages. By attaining the targets of the tourism development we will reach the multiplying effect of this. The profitable effects will be noticed upon the level of the population's gains and upon other external areas of the tourist activity. Even if the private structure is extremely active, the tourism cannot develop only through private initiatives, it also needs the support of the public institutions. The state can help in three directions: infrastructure, promotion and intelligent fiscal facilities.

The number of the Europeans who are visiting our country has increased since 2007. The tourism operators rely on the curiosity of the old EU members of discovering the new states which adhered on the 1st of January 2007, but also on the elimination of the traveling restrictions. The foreigners may be interested mostly in the spa and rural tourism, very good represented in Romania. The economical agents in the field will be able to access, beginning with July 2007, European Funds for the tourism in Romania. The greatest part of the money is from The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development concerning the improvement of the life quality in the rural zones and promoting the rural tourism. There will be the possibility of co-financing for the projects which are done by the small and middle sized firms.

Still, together with the activity of promoting Romania as an attractive destination for tourism and business, people will be able to access E.U. funds through The European Fund for Regional Development. The projects which are developed based on this fund have as an aim the promotion of tourism and the development of the promotion centers. The development of the tourism refers also to the permanent promotion of the regional and local tourism, and brings funds that will be accessed from the European Fund for Regional Development, to which we add funds from the state budget. The projects will have as an aim the restoration and the capitalization of the historical and cultural patrimony, the capitalization of the natural resources and the increasing of the quality of services.

5. Conclusions

In the European Union, territorial units of medium size called regions were created, with the purpose to absorb efficiently the European Union funds for regional development and to interpret and research the regional statistics. In Romania there are 8 development regions. The development of tourism must be a sustainable one. Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The analysis of some indicators show that after a long period when the tourism had a descendent curve, in the last years this has had a positive evolution in almost all regions (the accommodation capacity has grown, the number of arrivals have grown too, only the index of utilization remaining at low levels). The tourism may become an important component of the economy, which can determine important mutations in the territorial field, contributing to the social-economic growth of a region. Romania possesses an important potential for developing the tourism, which is not developed at the existing potential level. In the last years it is noticed a small growth of the tourism; it is estimated a continuation and even a stimulation of this tendency, especially because of the investments in tourism and the attraction of tourists the European Union.

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